

**by Staff Sgt. Doug Gibson**  
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As an Air Force recruiter, I talk with potential airmen every day. I know how easy it is to turn them off to the Air Force without realizing you do it.

So many young people leave my office fired up and ready to join, excited about serving their country in the world's finest Air Force, only to return a few days later telling me that they met someone in the Air Force who told them they were making a mistake.

I believe most of the Air Force people who give advice to potential recruits honestly think they are helping the individual. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

The most common scenario is when the young recruit is entering the Air Force in job "X", and the well-intentioned active-duty person tells them, "Job 'X' is a crappy job! Go back and tell your recruiter you want job 'Y' or you won't join!"

I'm sure these people think they are helping, and many seem to think recruiters are shifty-eyed weasels who intentionally try to place good people into less desirable jobs. The truth however, is often that job 'X' is a less desir-

able job only in their eyes.

There are many reasons people join the Air Force, and different jobs appeal to different folks.

The well-meaning advice giver probably has no idea what this applicant's qualifications are. Maybe their test scores limited their job choices, maybe their Sensitive Jobs Code doesn't qualify them for certain jobs, maybe the Air Force has no openings for job 'Y's' particular Air Force Specialty Code.

Many people think if there are shortages on base in a certain AFSC, then recruiters can give out that job. It doesn't work that way.

For example, the security forces career field, as we all know, is undermanned; however, there are no openings currently available for those positions! The technical school is booked full for the rest of the summer.

# 'Advice' not always good for recruiting

Security forces, by the way, is probably the most commonly requested job from people coming into a recruiting office.

The result of the well-intentioned, but errant advice, is an applicant who no longer has any faith in the recruiter, and now believes that job 'Y' is the only one worth having in the Air Force.

Since the recruit probably isn't qualified for job 'Y' or it isn't available, this young person often leaves with a poor impression of the Air Force and goes back to flipping burgers or pushing carts at the local department store.

I know, if the average active-duty person knew the impact a simple piece of advice could have on these kids, they would be more careful.

I encourage my applicants to seek out military members to learn about life in the service, and despite what many think, we

aren't trying to hide anything from applicants. We go to great lengths to match an applicant to the best possible job.

If I could encourage one thing from the active Air Force community, it would be to talk about their own experiences in the Air Force — without trying to guide the potential recruit's career.

Tell them about the things most of them want to know, like what is day-to-day life like? What time do you get up? What are the dining halls like? How often do you get to leave the base?

These are a few of the more common questions. Tell them what you think of the Air Force, why you joined, what you have found.

Did you know many applicants think we all get up at 4:30 a.m. to reveille and do physical training, or how many think that a chow hall is a place where some grizzled old cook called "sarge" slops green stuff on your tray?

Did you know a lot of these kids think our security guys on the gates are there to keep us in, unless we have a town pass?

These are misconceptions that active-duty Air Force people can help eliminate, and that's how they can best support the recruiting program.